

GUIDELINES FOR HOME STUDY PREPARATION

REQUIREMENTS:

1. HOME STUDY PREPARER:

As per the Alabama Adoption Code, Sec 26-10A-19 A Home Study (Pre-placement investigation may be conducted by:

- The Department of Human Resources (Public Agency)
- A licensed child-placing agency (Private Non-Profit and For-Profit)
- A social worker who is certified by the State Board of Social Work Examiners for private practice in the social casework specialty (Section 34-30-3).
- A social worker II or above who is under the state merit system and who is certified by the State Board of Social Work Examiners for private practice in the social casework specialty (Section 34-30-3).

**** Adoption Facilitators are not licensed in the State of Alabama and are not regulated by anyone in the State of Alabama.**

Continuing Education

- The State Board of Social Work Examiners shall require a minimum of 5 hours of the continuing education requirements in a licensing period be specifically related to the issues of adoption.
- This educational requirement shall apply to all levels of licensure.

2. HOME STUDY PROCESS MUST INCLUDE:

- At least three (3) face-to-face interviews are required, including one joint interview, an individual interview for each adoption applicant, and one home visit.
- Interviews must be conducted on more than one date.
- There must also be one interview conducted with any other adult member of the household and with any children in the family. Adult children living outside the home may be interviewed by telephone. These interviews may be conducted on the same date as the above referenced interviews.

HOME STUDY ELEMENTS:

1. APPLICATION PROCESS AND MOTIVATION TO ADOPT:

- State dates of contact and type of face-to-face interviews and where they were held.
- State why applicants wish to adopt
- Summarize any other pertinent contacts with the family.

2. ASSESSMENT OF EACH APPLICANT TO PROPERLY PARENT:

- Assessment of family and childhood background including education, employment, family relationships, lifestyle and history of substance abuse, sexual/physical/emotional abuse and/or domestic violence.
- Assessment of parenting skills (experience with children or previous parenting experience). Include a discussion on their ideas on appropriate discipline.
- Assessment of marital relationship if applicable.
- Assessment of the applicants health (physical, mental and emotional).
Medical assessment shall include but is not limited to:

Any disease within the household members which is transmittable by direct or indirect contact; communicable or contagious to others.

- Any medications the applicant is taking, including psychotropic drugs, which might negatively impact the ability of the applicant to nurture and parent a child.
- Physician(s) of record shall provide documentation of the medical/emotional health of the applicant.

3. ASSESSMENT OF REFERENCES:

- Six (6) references must be contacted to evaluate the applicant's suitability to adopt
- The record should document information received from references
- References should be obtained from employers, relatives, friends and ministers (if applicable)

4. ASSESSMENT OF CHILD CARE PLAN:

- If both parents work, discuss parents plans to take time off work at the time of placement and child care plans when the parents return to work.

5. ASSESSMENT OF OPENNESS AND RISK ISSUES:

- Describe the degree of Openness and the level of Risk that the Adoptive Family has indicated they are prepared to accept.

6. FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT:

- The financial assessment must include a description of the income, financial resources, debts, and living expenses of the prospective adoptive parents
- A statement concerning the evidence that was considered to verify the source and amount of income and financial resources
- Validation should include a copy of 1040 or pay stubs or Schedule C for self-employed.
- Indicate the amount of discretionary income designated for the support of additional dependent (monthly expenses – net income= discretionary income)
- Other household member's income must not be counted towards the income available

7. CRIMINAL HISTORY, HISTORY OF ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT, AND HISTORY OF VIOLENCE:

- Each adult in the household must be screened for Abuse and Neglect validated by the State's Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry
 - All children in household age 14 and up shall also be screened for Abuse and Neglect
- Each adult in the household must be screened for a Criminal Record through the ABI & FBI fingerprint analysis
 - Children in the household, age 19 and up shall be screened for a criminal record
 - Disclosure by each adult member of household of any criminal arrest and/or conviction.
 - If there is a disclosure of history of abuse and/or neglect, criminal history and/or history of violence, the home study must contain an evaluation of suitability of the home in light of this history. Evaluation must include:
 - Information concerning all arrests or convictions, or history of substance abuse, sexual or child abuse, and/or domestic violence and the date of each occurrence.

- A certified copy of the documentation showing final disposition of any incident, which resulted in arrest, indictment, conviction, and/or any judicial judgment or administrative action.
 - A signed statement from the prospective adoptive parent(s) giving details including mitigating circumstances, if any, about each incident.
 - All of the above must be applied to each adult member of the prospective household.
- If the preparer makes a favorable decision, the home study must include Evidence of Rehabilitation and the documentation must include:
 - Discussion of rehabilitation which demonstrates that the prospective adoptive parent is and will be able to provide proper care for the child
 - Evaluation of the seriousness of the arrest(s), conviction(s), or history of abuse.
 - Number of such incidents
 - The length of time since the last incident.
 - Any counseling or rehabilitation programs which have been successfully completed.
 - Evidence of rehabilitation by an appropriate licensed professional, if any.
 - All facts and circumstances, which were considered.
 - Home study preparer's reasons for favorable home study.
 - Home study preparer must apply all of these requirements to all adult member of the household.
- **FAILURE TO DISCLOSE OR COOPERATE**
 - Failure of adoptive parents or any adult member of the household to disclose arrest, conviction or history of substance abuse, sexual abuse or child abuse, and/or domestic violence by prospective adoptive parents to the home study preparer may result in the denial of the applicants by the agencies or PIP
- **PREVIOUS REJECTION FOR ADOPTION OR PRIOR UNFAVORABLE HOMESTUDY**
 - If a prospective adoptive couple or single parent response to whether either has been rejected or received an unfavorable home study is positive:
 - The home study shall document the reasons for such findings
 - This requirement applies to all adult members of the household
- **LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE HOME STUDY**
 - A detailed description of the current living accommodations and housekeeping standards.
 - Must note smoke detectors and fire extinguishers
 - Must note if any weapons are kept in the home and what security provisions have been taken.
 - Outside pools must be properly secured.
 - Statement that the State of Alabama does not have any regulations relative to the living conditions for an adoptive child. (THIS IS ONLY REQUIRED ON INTERNATIONAL STUDIES.)
- **CHILD DESIRED**
 - **DISCUSSION OF THE CHILD DESIRED**

- If the applicant is accepting of a child with special needs there should be a discussion of prospective adoptive parents' preparation, willingness, and ability to provide proper care for such a child

- SUMMARY OF THE COUNSELING/EDUCATION GIVEN AND PLANS FOR POST-PLACEMENT COUNSELING/EDUCATION MUST INCLUDE:
 - Discussion of available resources for Pre and Post- Adoptive needs such as APAC, support groups, recommended readings, contacts with other adoptive couples, parenting training and counseling.
 - Talking with the child about his/her adoption

- SPECIFIC APPROVAL OF THE PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE PARENT(S):
 - Documentation shall include but not be limited to:
 - Home study preparer's specific approval.
 - Discussion of reasons for approval.
 - Number of children that may be adopted.
 - Whether there are any specific restrictions such as:
 - Child's race, nationality, age or gender
 - Whether approved for a special needs adoption.